

FINAL CAPSTONE PROJECT

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Eat Your Heart Out

A GMO communication plan to
counter fear-based marketing



THE SITUATION

There is a large anti-GMO movement, which has convinced a significant portion of the general public that GMOs are bad for them.

This is a problem because not only are GMOs safe, but they are an important part of the agricultural system.

There are public health, economic and environmental consequences to this.



SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Scientific consensus: GMO foods just as healthy as non-GMO
- Environmental benefits

WEAKNESSES

- Difficult to communicate about science
- Anti-GMO groups were ahead of the game
- Differing brands under same company umbrella

OPPORTUNITIES

- Moveable middle
- Human element
- Consumers are doing their research

THREATS

- Pseudo-science
- Preconcieved notions can be hard to get past



ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS

The anti-GMO movement is largely made up of fear-based marketing. It is difficult to combat emotional appeals with strictly fact-based messaging.

So, we must engage consumers in a different way. By sharing the perspectives of real people, we will work to position GMOs normal and important part of our agricultural system. These people will share the benefits GMOs provide, and they'll **include by facts** about GMOs, presented in an easily digestible format.

Earned, paid and shared and owned channels will be leveraged to spread the campaign and engage the public in a dialogue.



WHY GMOS?

When asked if they believe
GM foods are safe to eat...

88% OF SCIENTISTS
SAY YES

37% OF U.S. ADULTS
SAY YES

This is one of the largest gaps
between public and scientific
opinion on an issue.

Source: PEW Research Center, 2015

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS



EARN POSITIVE MEDIA COVERAGE

12-15 positive placements
in local media outlets
across Minnesota over the
course of the campaign.

ULTIMATELY,
IMPROVE PUBLIC
OPINION ABOUT GMOS
AND AVOID NEGATIVE
LEGISLATION.

SEE SOME SOCIAL CHATTER AND ENGAGEMENT

50,000 total post impressions
(including influencer posts) and
500 engagements across all
posts (likes, comments, shares).

PRIMARY RESEARCH - EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Method: Held phone or in-person interviews with five experts in the food and agriculture space, from across the spectrum, representing farmers, executives, academics, nutritionists and marketers.

Key Findings

- The anti-GMO movement is fueled by fear.
- The general public doesn't seem to respond to scientific messaging very well.
- Anti-GMO groups are successful because they are focusing on just one issue.
- Corporations have a hard time tackling this issue due to the complexity.
- Companies don't want to alienate consumers.
- It is important not to ignore what consumers want, they need to be listened to.
- One of the most important ways to improve public perception is to build relationships with people, to lay a foundation of trust.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Key Findings

- For a specific issue like GMOs, the public will be more likely to tune into messaging from an industry organization, versus an individual corporation. (Miller & Lellis, 2015)
- Partnering with a trusted third-party organization will help boost credibility. (Kim & Kim, 2014)
- A successful tactic for reframing the conversation could be to position GMOs as a normal part of the agricultural process. (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015)
- “It isn’t enough to have the correct stance on an issue or the correct positioning for a product or a service; you must also offer it up in such a way that the listener or the consumer can relate to, understand, and appreciate it.” -Frank Luntz, *Words That Work* (2007, p. 266)

CULTURAL INSIGHT

The anti-GMO movement is **one piece of a larger anti-science trend** which relies on emotional appeals and the spread of misinformation. But **facts and emotions don't have to be mutually exclusive.**



MARKET INSIGHT

Brands have **capitalized on people's fear of what they don't know, combined with overall economic health,** allowing them to charge a premium for non-GMO products.



CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Trust in corporations is low, so consumers are **more likely to listen to their networks or other seemingly objective sources** about what to buy and eat.

Many consumers feel that their purchasing decisions make a **statement about their values.**



A woman with blonde, wavy hair is standing in a grocery store aisle. She is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and is looking down at a smartphone in her right hand. In her left hand, she is holding a carton of milk. The background shows shelves stocked with various grocery items, including produce and packaged goods. A shopping cart is visible in the lower left corner. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay with white text and green decorative brackets.

SWEET SPOT // CAMPAIGN INSIGHT

Consumers want to know that they are making the best choices for their personal health, and they don't want those choices to negatively impact the greater community.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

People who want to do good and feel good.

A young girl with glasses and a ponytail is feeding a woman with long blonde hair outdoors. The woman is wearing a red shirt and has her hand near her mouth. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

MOMS WHO DO THEIR RESEARCH

These moms do their research, whether it's about food, video games or screen time. They enjoy sharing their findings with mom friends.

Key driver: Buzz

A woman with curly red hair is sitting at a table outdoors, taking a photo of a dish with her smartphone. She is wearing a blue floral dress. The table is set with various dishes, glasses, and a bottle. There are potted plants in the background.

SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS FOODIES

These foodies believe that food should be an experience, and they love learning about social issues such as food insecurity.

Key drivers: Emotional Bond, Experience



CAMPAIGN STRAGTEGY:

Get to know GMO

KEY MESSAGES

- **[Do good]** GMOs provide a host of benefits for farmers, the environment, and people in developing countries.
- **[Do good]** GMO technology has been a game-changer for farmers of all sizes, even saving some from going under.
- **[Do good]** GMO foods are helping reduce health issues, such as blindness, in third world countries.
- **[Feel good]** GMO foods are just as healthy and safe as their non-GMO counterparts.



A CUP OF JO

≡ MENU

FOOD

What Are Your Most Burning Questions About Food?

By Jenny Rosenstrach

TACTIC 1: INFLUENCER POSTS

Driver: Buzz

Series of Q&A style stories about their personal take on GMOs.

Work with five influencers in the **mom blog** and **food blog** spaces.

Posts may be from a practical stance (food is just as healthy but more expensive) or from a more humanitarian lens.

SCIENCE + HEALTH

GMOs are Helping Revitalize Farming Communities in Africa

Food technology has become a controversial topic in recent years, but there's no denying it is changing the food security conversation.

Pass any Chipotle these days and you will see signs clearly stating "removing ingredients that contain GMOs (genetically modified organisms) from the menu. It is the first big chain to do so, and p... The business press has pronounced it "a savvy move" and a "bet on the younger generations in America."

This milestone in the history of fast-food scruples (and a noteworthy cultural development: the systematic in... scientific attitudes into corporate branding strategies... evidence that ingesting a plant that has been swiftly genetically modified in a lab has a different health outcome than ingesting a plant that has been slowly genetically modified through selective breeding. The National Academy of Sciences, the American Medical Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the World Health Organization have concluded that GMOs are safe to eat. This scientific

TACTIC 2: LOCAL EARNED MEDIA

Drivers: Buzz, Emotional Bond

Series of **human-focused stories** about GMOs and GMO farming, pitched to local media.

Partnership with World Food Programme experts.

Stories will focus on the human element in the GMO debate: farmers, families and communities that are impacted.



TACTIC 3: EXPERIENCE #GetToKnowGMO

Drivers: Experience, Emotional Bond

Phase 1: Set up at Minneapolis and St. Paul farmers markets for farmers and experts to interact with visitors, educate about GMOs.

Phase 2: Minnesota State Fair exhibit bringing the #GetToKnowGMO experience even bigger. Influencers will visit throughout the 10 days and share experience.

About 15,900,000 results (0.45 seconds)

GMO Foods To Avoid | Keep GMO Apples Out

[Ad] www.organicconsumers.org/Tell-Grocers/No-GMO-A

Who Stands To Benefit From The GMO Apple? Not Consumer
GMO Apple Uses An Experimental, Unregulated Technique 'RM
for Health. Food Safety Activism. Consumer Education. Grass

All You Need to Know About GMO | From The

[Ad] www.livingnongmo.org/about/GMO

What Are They? What Foods Might Contain GMOs? How Do I
Environment. Look for the Butterfly. Promote Healthy Eating.
Newsletter. Brands: Annie's Homegrown, Chosen Foods, Eden
GMO FAQs · Take Action Against GMOs · Non-GMO Recipes
Minneapolis · 5 locations nearby

Genetically Modified Foods Pose Huge Health

[Ad] www.cornucopia.org/stop-monsanto-gmo (608) 6

We Are All Concerned about GMOs. Keep Your Food Safe, Take
Labeling Updates.
Dangers of GMO formula · Natural vs Organic · Read Our Almo

The Truth About GMOs: Are They Safe? What Do We Know? - WebMD

<https://www.webmd.com> > Food & Recipes > Feature Stories

Apr 8, 2016 - Those against them say eating foods made from GMOs is bad for you. Those in favor
argue that you're way better off from the benefits that ...

SUPPORTING TACTICS

Owned: Get To Know GMO site will be developed as a place to send traffic from other tactics.

Paid Search: Direct traffic to the Get To Know GMO site for certain key word searches.

Paid Social: Boost social posts related to other tactics, specifically influencer and experiential, to expand the reach of the campaign overall.

#GetTo Know GMO



500,000

PEOPLE IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES GO BLIND
EVERY YEAR DUE TO
VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY.

GMO GOLDEN RICE

IS ENGINEERED TO
PROVIDE THE LEVELS OF
VITAMIN A NECESSARY
TO FIGHT THIS.

FIGHTING GLOBAL
FOOD INSECURITY.
ONE SEED AT A
TIME.





IMPLEMENTATION

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

- Influencer and experiential programs will be expensive. How can we use existing resources to minimize?
- Earned media: staff costs only
- Paid search and social will vary throughout the campaign, depending on pushes.

TIMELINE: MAR. - OCT. 2020

- Influencer program: March-September
- Earned media: March-October
- Experiential: June-September
- Social boosting: March-September

STAFF: 5

- Campaign manager to oversee work.
- Communications specialist to manage earned media and paid programs.
- Three marketing specialists to manage experiential and influencer efforts.

A woman with curly hair is smiling and looking down at a market stall. She is wearing a grey cardigan over a white lace top and carrying a teal shopping bag. The stall is filled with various fruits, including avocados, grapes, and apples. In the background, there are other market stalls and a blue and white striped awning.

IN CONCLUSION...

By appealing to the **human side of the GMO debate**, offering accurate information paired with stories that evoke emotion, we can counter the fear-based marketing that has thus far dominated the public dialogue. The campaign empowers consumers with the information they need to **do good and feel good**, for themselves, their families, their communities, the environment and the world.

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